

Message Text

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ACTION HA-05

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SREF
SUBJECT: DEVELOPMENTS CONCERNING REFUGEE MOVEMENT TO AUSTRALIA

REF: BANGKOK 7398

1. ON THE HEELS OF AMCONSUL SONGKHLA'S REPORT (REFTEL) OF REFUGEES DEPARTING BY BOAT FOR AUSTRALIA, L NEWS REACHED REF: OPS OF A BOATLOAD OF REFUGEES HAVING DEPARTED FROM THE MALAYSIAN REFUGEE CAMP AT PULAU TENGAH. AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION KUALA LUMPUR INFORMED IMMEDIATELY AND OFFICERS THERE CONFIRMED THAT ON MARCH 9, A NUMBER OF REFUGEES DEPARTED BY BOAT FROM PULAU TENGAH AND ARE EN-ROUTE TO AUSTRALIA.
2. APPARENTLY, VIETNAMESE REFUGEE VESSEL 1028 ADC STOPPED AT PULAU TENGAH EN-ROUTE TO AUSTRALIA. A TOTAL OF 58 REFUGEES REPORTEDLY DISEMBARKED FROM THE VESSEL AND REMAINED AT PULAU TENGAH. ANOTHER 88 REFUGEES WHO HAD BEEN AWAITING RESETTLEMENT ON PULAU TENGAH JOINED REFUGEES ON BOARD THE 1028 ADC AND SET OUT FOR AUSTRALIA. THE TOTAL NUMBER

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OF REFUGEES ABOARD THE VESSEL IS UNCLEAR AT THIS TIME.

3. AUSTRALIANS AT HIGH COMMISSION KL UNDERSTANDABLY DISMAYED AT EVENTS AND ALLUDED TO "BLACKMAIL" ON PART OF REFUGEES. POST WAS SURPRISED TO NOTE THAT AMONG REFUGEES WHO DEPARTED FOR AUSTRALIA WERE TEN APPROVED UNDER IPP-77 AND IPP-78.

4. AS REGARD REFUGEES WHO HAD BEEN APPROVED UNDER U.S. PROGRAMS AND WHO HAD NEVERTHELESS STRUCK OUT ON 1028 ADC, THE AUSTRALIANS WERE GENTLY INFORMED THAT SUCH REFUGEES HAD BY THEIR ACTION REJECTED A U.S. RESETTLEMENT OFFER AND WERE NO LONGER CONSIDERED ELIGIBLE FOR U.S. RESETTLEMENT. THIS WAS IN RESPONSE TO AN AUSTRALIAN STATEMENT THAT THE REFUGEES MIGHT STOP IN INDONESIA TO REFUEL AND AUSTRALIANS MAY TRY TO CONTACT THEM AND REMONSTRATE WITH THEM THERE. POST DOES FEEL, HOWEVER, THAT REFUGEES' RELATIVES WHO HAD REMAINED ON PULAU TENGAH, AND WHO HAD BEEN ACCEPTED UNDER U.S. PROGRAMS, SHOULD BE PROCESSED AS USUAL FOR U.S. RESETTLEMENT.

5. LOOKING OVER LIST OF DEPARTEES, REF: OPS NOTED GOOD NUMBER OF YOUNG PERSONS HAD LEFT PULAU TENGAH ABOARD 1028 ADC. THESE ARE UNDERSTOOD TO BE PROSPECTIVE "ANCHOR RELATIVES". IF PAST AUSTRALIAN PROGRAM CRITERIA ARE USED, PULAU TENGAH REFUGEES WITH RELATIVES IN AUSTRALIA WILL BE GIVEN PRIORITY.

6. IN THIS VEIN, AUSTRALIAN OFFICERS NOTED MORNING'S RADIO AUSTRALIA BROADCAST REPORTING THAT A NEW AUSTRALIAN INDO-CHINESE REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM IS NOW UNDER CONSIDERTION BY CABINET. AUSTRALIANS SAID THAT WHILE NO OFFICIAL WORD HAD REACHED THEM, THEY THOUGHT THAT THE NEW PROGRAM WOULD BE IN THE RANGE OF 6,000 ACCEPTANCES. THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PROGRAM, THEY SAID, WOULD PROBABLY RUN FROM APRIL UNTIL JULY OF 1978 AND THAT AS MANY AS 2,000 REFUGEES COULD BE SELECTED FROM MALAYSIAN CAMPS. THE REMAINDER, THEY THOUGHT, WOULD PROBABLY COME FROM THAI INLAND AND BOAT CAMPS. AUSTRALIANS EMPHASIZED THAT THEY HAD NO HARD INFORMATION ON THE NEW PROGRAM.

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